13

薫る花は凛と咲く

三香見サカ

Saka Mikami

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

Chapter 98: Yorita's Answer

I SEE NOW...

...AND THAT'S WHY IT'S BEEN YOUR DREAM TO BECOME ONE, TOO.

YEAH...

GLOOM

SO YOU ALWAYS LOOKED UP TO YOUR OLDER BROTHER, WHO WORKED AS A POLICE OFFICER...

...

SILENCE

...

W-WELL, I WAS...

BUT IT'S BEEN ON YOUR MIND THIS WHOLE TIME?

YEAH...

ALSO, WHEN YOU TOLD US THAT, YOU WEREN'T NECESSARILY LYING EITHER, RIGHT?

NO WORRIES ABOUT THAT. WHAT MATTERS IS HOW YOU FEEL.

WHEN I SAID I WANTED TO WORK IN A RESTAURANT LAST TIME... I WAS LYING, I'M SORRY.

EVEN THOUGH YOU TOLD US NOT TO WORRY?

にょ PEEK ま

BUT, I'M FINE. SORRY THAT I WORRIED YOU GUYS.

...

...!

LEAN LEAN

THEN WE COULD'VE HUNG OUT TO GET YOUR MIND OFF THINGS!

SHOULD'VE JUST COME CLEAN INSTEAD OF BEATING AROUND THE BUSH!

WOW, WHAT A BUMMER!

YORITA LOOKED APOLOGETIC THE WHOLE TIME HE EXPLAINED HIMSELF, TOO...

I GUESS THIS IS HIS WAY OF EASING UP THE TENSION...

?!

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN.

HEY, USA—

THOUGH I THINK I SHOULD SLOWLY REEL HIM BACK IN, OR ELSE...

にょ PEEK ま

HE'S CLEARLY GETTING HIS REVENGE NOW BECAUSE HE'S USUALLY THE ONE GETTING TEASED...
CHATTER
CHATTER
PLUS, WEREN'T YOU THE ONE PREACHING TO ME ABOUT THE WHOLE GIVE-AND-TAKE THING?

YEAH...
YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.
...!
ISN'T THAT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE FRIENDS?
Riiight?

...BECAUSE WE'RE FRIENDS!
AND I DIDN'T WANNA TELL YOU GUYS...

?!

I THINK THAT...

...

...YOU PROBABLY WOULD HAVE ALSO SUPPORTED ME ALL THE WAY BACK THEN.

EVEN IF I'D COME CLEAN TO YOU GUYS ABOUT MY DREAM OF BECOMING A POLICE OFFICER BEFORE TODAY...

...THEN THERE MIGHT COME A DAY WHERE I'LL REGRET EVEN GETTING THIS PUSH FROM YOU.

...ONLY TO POSSIBLY REGRET IT IN THE FUTURE...

...CHASE AFTER MY DREAM...

BUT IF I MADE YOU GUYS PUSH MY BACK WHILE I'M STILL SO UNDECIDED...

...NEVER BE ABLE TO FORGIVE MYSELF.

AND FROM THAT DAY ON...

I'D MOST LIKELY...

...I DIDN'T WANNA TELL YOU GUYS.

SO, UNTIL I'D FOUND MY OWN ANSWER...

M-MY BAD...

Ha ha ha.

YOUR LEVEL OF INSIGHT IS HONESTLY TERRIFYING AT TIMES.

THOUGH RINTARO FOUND OUT BEFORE I COULD DO THAT.

AND SINCE SAKU-KUN, WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO TEACH US, WASN'T SHOWING UP, WE WENT TO LOOK FOR HIM...

YOU KNOW, WE'D PROMISED TO MEET UP ON THE WEEK-END TO STUDY TOGETHER, RIGHT?

What was it?

DO YOU GUYS REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE WINTER OF OUR FIRST YEAR?

What a pain...

ERK, NOW I REMEMBER...

THAT DID HAPPEN, YEAH.

OH, RIGHT.

...ONLY TO FIND HIM SURROUNDED BY A BUNCH OF THIRD YEARS BEHIND THE SCHOOL.

BACK THEN, THERE WERE A BUNCH OF THOSE GOONS WALKING AROUND IN CHIDORI, HUH?

Of course, we met plenty of great seniors, too.

YEAH, YEAH.

...I GOT PISSED OFF AND JUST GAVE THEM A PIECE OF MY MIND...

SINCE THOSE GUYS WEREN'T LISTENING AT ALL...

...WHO TRIED TO SMOOTH THINGS OVER.

Now, now...

BUT YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE...

...

THAT WAS SOMETHING, YEAH.

WHEN YOU JUST SWITCHED COMPLE-TELY...

AND THEN IT HAP-PENED, EH?

Oh ho ho...

JUST WHEN ONE OF THOSE GUYS WAS FLINGING HIS FIST AT NATSUSAWA...
...?!
?!

SLAM

TH-THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!

RELAX, YOU TWO...!

TELL ME ABOUT IT!

I WAS TRYING MY BEST TO HOLD BACK ALL THIS TIME!

YOU SERI-OUS?!

WELL...

...ALL BY YOURSELF.

IN THE END, YOU CLEANED HOUSE WITH THEM...

I-I WAS JUST TRYING TO DEFUSE THE SITUA-TION...!

SO YOU SAY, BUT YOU WENT NO PUNCHES PULLED ON ONE GUY TOO, RIGHT?

CHATTER

YOU SCARED THE CRAP OUT OF ME WHEN YOU JUST STARTED RUNNING...

CHATTER

I FELT REFRESHED, THOUGH.

WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT WENT DOWN AT FIRST!

BACK THEN...

...

...OF BECOMING A POLICE OFFICER.

I'D ALREADY GIVEN UP ON MY DREAM...

HOW THE HELL ARE YOU THIS STRONG?!

HA!! LEAN!!

GRAB

YORITA! YOU'RE NOT HURT, ARE YOU?!

BUT THEN...

YOU GUYS OKAY?

!

HEY, AYATO...

That was so crazy!

THANKS A BUNCH...

...FOR PROTECTING ME.

Is your hand okay?

I FELT LIKE I'D LOST EVERYTHING

THAT DAY

I SHOWED HIM...

I decided to quit.

THE POLICE

YEAH.

THE PASSION THAT DRIVES ME

THE ACHIEVEMENT I FELT

SUCH A PATHETIC SIDE OF ME.

ALL OF IT.

THANK YOU.

...WHY?

WHY DO I YET AGAIN...

REMEMBER THAT BACK OF HIS?

I COULDN'T COMPLETELY CUT IT OFF.

MY DREAM OF BECOMING A POLICE OFFICER...

BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY...

...WAS LIT ONCE MORE.

I THOUGHT IT HAD DISAPPEARED. THAT SMALL FLICKER OF LIGHT THAT SHOULD'VE VANISHED...

IT CONTINUED TO LINGER INSIDE OF ME.

...I'VE BEEN HALF-BAKING IT.

AND EVER SINCE THEN...

...THAT IF I PRETENDED IT DIDN'T EXIST...

IT WOULD DISAPPEAR ONE DAY.

BUT... I WAS TOO SCARED TO FACE IT.

A PART OF ME HOPED...

BUT...
RINTARO JUST...
WHETHER YOU WANT TO WORK AT A RESTAURANT OR AS A MEMBER OF THE POLICE
I'D LIKE TO BE THERE AND SUPPORT THE DECISION YOU'VE MADE.
...IS TO BECOME A POLICE OFFICER.
...HIT THE NAIL RIGHT ON THE MARK.
FROM THE BOTTOM OF YOUR HEART.
TO SUPPORT SOMETHING THAT YOU WISH TO DO
...I WOULD REGRET IT ONE DAY.
THEN I'M SURE...
I REAL-IZED...
...THAT I'D REACH THE POINT WHERE I CAN'T ERASE THE BURNING FLAME INSIDE ME ANY LONGER.

I SWEAR...

...

JUST KID-DING...

IT WAS THANKS TO ALL OF YOU.

YOU'RE PUTTING THE BLAME ON RINTARO?!

SAY WHAT?!

YOU JUST HAD TO GO AND RUIN EVERYTHING, HUH?!

HA HA HA!

ON ME?!

I FEEL LIKE...

I FINALLY FOUND AN ANSWER I'M HAPPY WITH.

SO, THANK YOU.

I THINK WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE ON OUR WAY.

YEAH, YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN.

I'M HONESTLY MORE CONCERNED WITH HOW FREEZING IT IS!

ANYWAY... SORRY TO KEEP YOU GUYS FOR SO LONG. YOU SURE YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO HOME?

HM ...?

AND TELL HER I'M GRATEFUL, TOO.

Y- YEAH...

AND, RINTARO... COULD YOU APOLOGIZE TO YOUR MOTHER AND THE OTHER EMPLOYEES FOR ME AGAIN?

YEAH, GOTCHA.

...IS BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED TODAY, SO.

THE REASON I COULD MAKE UP MY MIND...

I CAN'T WAIT TO GET A ROUND OF SCOLDING ONCE I GET HOME...

I SHOULD PROBABLY LET THEM KNOW, TOO...

YOU DUMBASS...

OH CRAP, I FORGOT TO TELL MY PARENTS THAT I'D BE LATE!

STOP

...!

SWIPE

WHERE'S MY CHAT WITH MOM...

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT IS THAT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY REGRETS LATER.

WHENEVER YOU HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION...

THE REST COMES [redacted] THE WAY, OR SO I THINK AT LEAST

...

TAK

TAK TAK

TAK

TAP

TAP

SHUP

SWIP

BUMP

BUMP

Sorry to text you out of the blue.
I just wanna know...
Did you ever regret becoming a police officer?

BUMP

SHUP

I just wanna know...
Did you ever regret becoming a police officer?

SOME-THING WRONG?

AYATO?

HEH...

JUST HAD TO CHECK SOME-THING.

Not even once.
21:48
あ
even once.
21:48
Thanks
TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK

HE'LL PROBABLY BE HOME OVER NEW YEAR'S.

IF I HAD TO GUESS...

...I THINK I'LL JUST TELL HIM IN PERSON.

ON MY WAY!

FWUMP

SORRY FOR THE DELAY!

CAN'T WE JUST GET CHRISTMAS PRESENTS FOREVER?

AWW MAN...

WHAT DID YOU GUYS WISH FOR THIS YEAR ANYWAY?

AREN'T WE STILL CHILDREN, TOO?! I WONDER HOW MANY MORE TIMES WE'RE GONNA GET PRESENTS.

I MEAN, DURING OUR SHIFT TODAY, I SAW A BOY ASKING HIS PARENTS FOR PRESENTS.

WHAT ARE YOU ON ABOUT?

JUST THAT I'D LIKE TO EAT CHICKEN FOR DINNER... BUT THAT'S ALL.

I DIDN'T WISH FOR ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR...

NO HESITATION, HUH?

THE PERKS OF BEING A KID.

NEW HEADPHONES.

I'M NOT BUYING THAT FOR ONE SECOND.

OH, PUH-LEASE. I'M 17 NOW. I'M NOT GOING TO ASK FOR PRESENTS ANYMORE. MY NAME ISN'T SAKU, AFTER ALL.

NOT MY FAULT. ANYWAY, WHAT ABOUT YOU, USAMI?

ARE YOU SERIOUS? THAT MAKES ME SOUND LIKE SOME ENTITLED BRAT...

HMM ...

DID YOU ASK FOR SOME-THING?

AND YOU, YORITA?

I ACTUALLY WANT TO BECOME A POLICE OFFICER.

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT IS THAT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY REGRETS LATER.

WHENEVER YOU HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION.

THE REST COMES ALONG THE WAY. OR SO I THINK A-

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

THANK YOU..

SOUNDS AWESOME. GO FOR IT

THEN THAT'S PERFECTLY FINE IN MY BOOK.

AND IF YOU SAY TO YOURSELF THAT... IT'S ALL WORK DON'T WHILE THINKING BACK

IT LOOKED TO ME...

...LIKE YOU'D BE DOING JUST FINE EITHER WAY

FOR PROTECT-ING OUR PRECIOUS CUSTOMERS

I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU...

ARE WE DOING A RACE TO THE TRAIN STATION?!

WHY ARE YOU RUNNING NOW?!

I ALREADY GOT MY PRESENT!

SO WHAT'D YOU GET IN THE END?!

HEY!

I'M NEVER TELLING YOU!

FORGET IT!

THE FIRST THING I'M GREETED WITH ONCE I WAKE UP...

...IS THAT PLUSH TOY.

THE ONE YOU WON FOR ME AT THAT FESTIVAL'S SHOOTING RANGE.

OVER TIME...

...HAVE STARTED TO FILL MY ROOM.

...MORE AND MORE THINGS THAT REMIND ME OF YOU...

...THESE THINGS FILL MY HEART...

EVEN WHEN WE CAN'T SEE EACH OTHER...

...AND MAKE ME HAPPY.

Chapter 99: Their Christmas

THIS PLACE IS CROWDED...

CHATTER

IT'S SATURDAY AND CHRISTMAS, AFTER ALL...

WELL, IT'S NOT THAT SURPRISING.

CHATTER

CHATTER

SINCE, FOR THE MOST PART, I'D HELP AT HOME OVER THE HOLIDAYS.

I RARELY EVEN SEE MASSIVE CROWDS LIKE THESE.

?!

BOOO!!

PAT

...BUT I'M A BIT WORRIED IF WE'RE EVEN GONNA FIND EACH OTHER LIKE THIS...

I DID TEXT HER EARLIER...

TAM

TAM

TAM

TAM

HEE
HEE.
DID
I GET
YOU?

Ha ha ha!
MISSION SUCCESS-FUL, THEN!
I SPOTTED YOU IMME-DIATELY BECAUSE YOU'RE SO TALL!
I... HEAR THAT A LOT.
YOU SURE DID, YEAH...
SIGH
OH, KAO-RUKO-SAN...
SMILE
GOOD THING WE DECIDED TO MEET UP A BIT LATER TODAY.
YUP! PLENTY OF REST!
...
DID YOU GET SOME GOOD REST?
ALSO, THANKS AGAIN FOR YESTERDAY.
HEY, KAO-RUKO-SAN?
YEAH?
YOU.
BUT WHENEVER I SEE YOU...
...ALWAYS LOOK VERY CUTE TO ME.
I WANT TO BE ABLE
TO SAY THESE KINDS OF THINGS WITHOUT ANY HESITATION
SOUNDS GOOD.
MAYBE WE COULD GRAB A BITE TO EAT UNTIL THEN?
WE'VE STILL GOT SOME TIME UNTIL THE LIGHTS TURN ON FOR THE ILLUMINATION, SO...
...

...REALLY CUTE TODAY.

YOU LOOK...

...!

THANK YOU...

...

AS YOU AL-WAYS DO...

SMILE ^=^

I'M GLAD...

I WAS HOPING YOU WOULD FEEL THAT WAY.

TAT

...?

A-
ANYWAY,
LET'S GO.

...!

!

GRAB

I
WOULDN'T...
WANT US
TO GET
SEPARATED.

MUMBLE

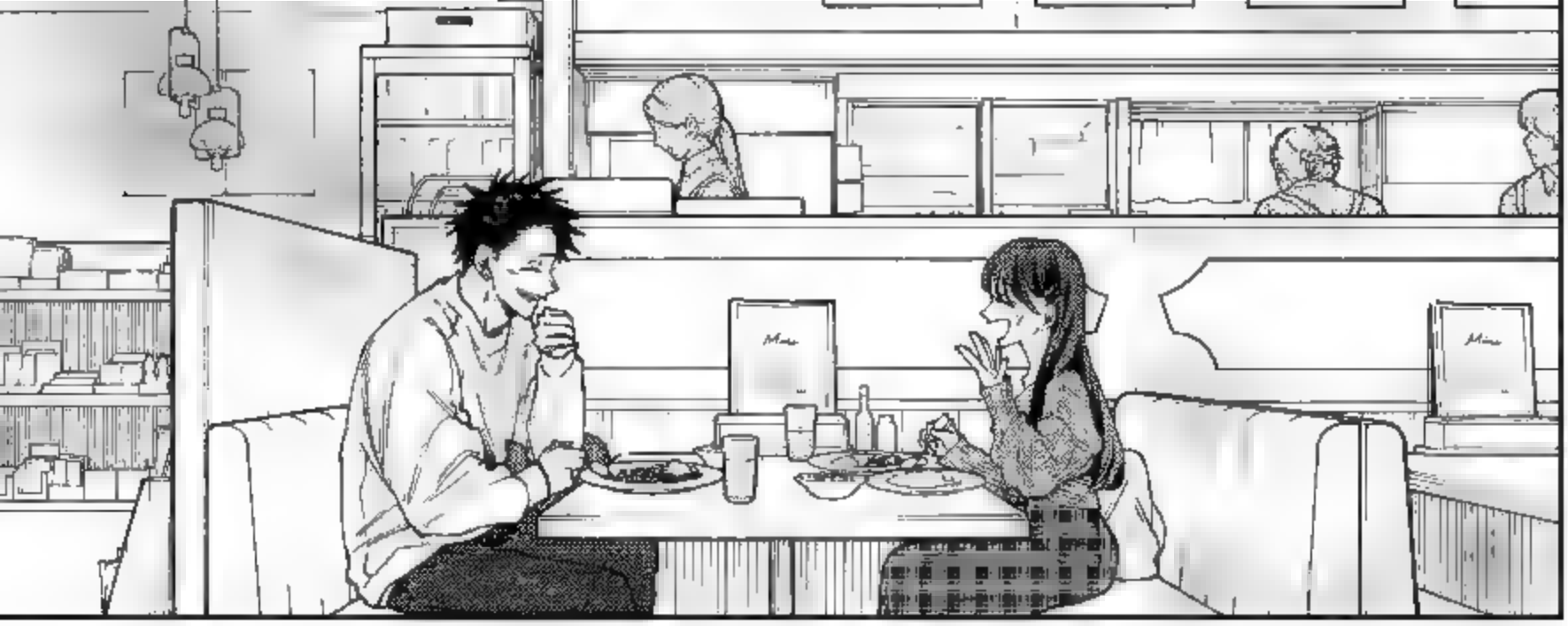
TURN

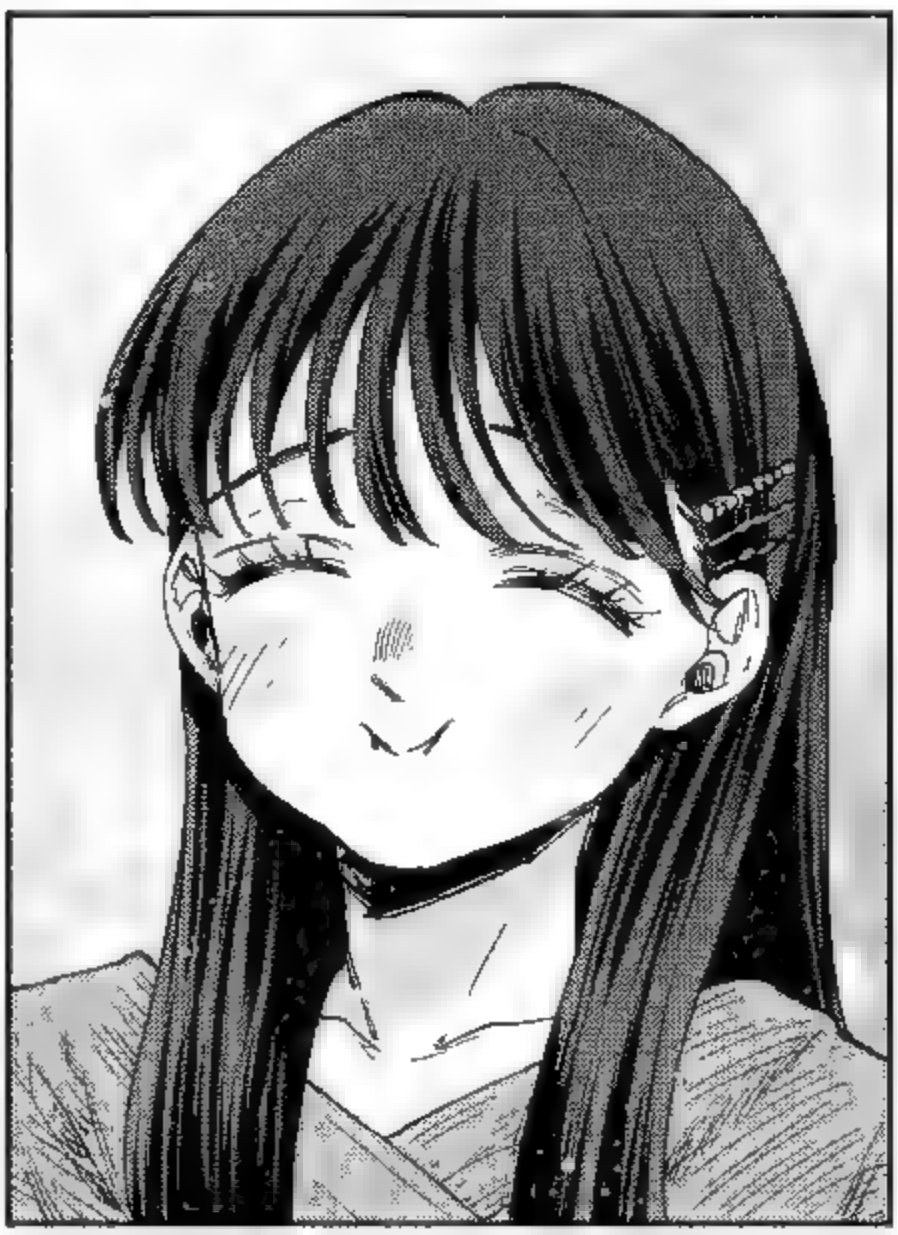
...YEAH.

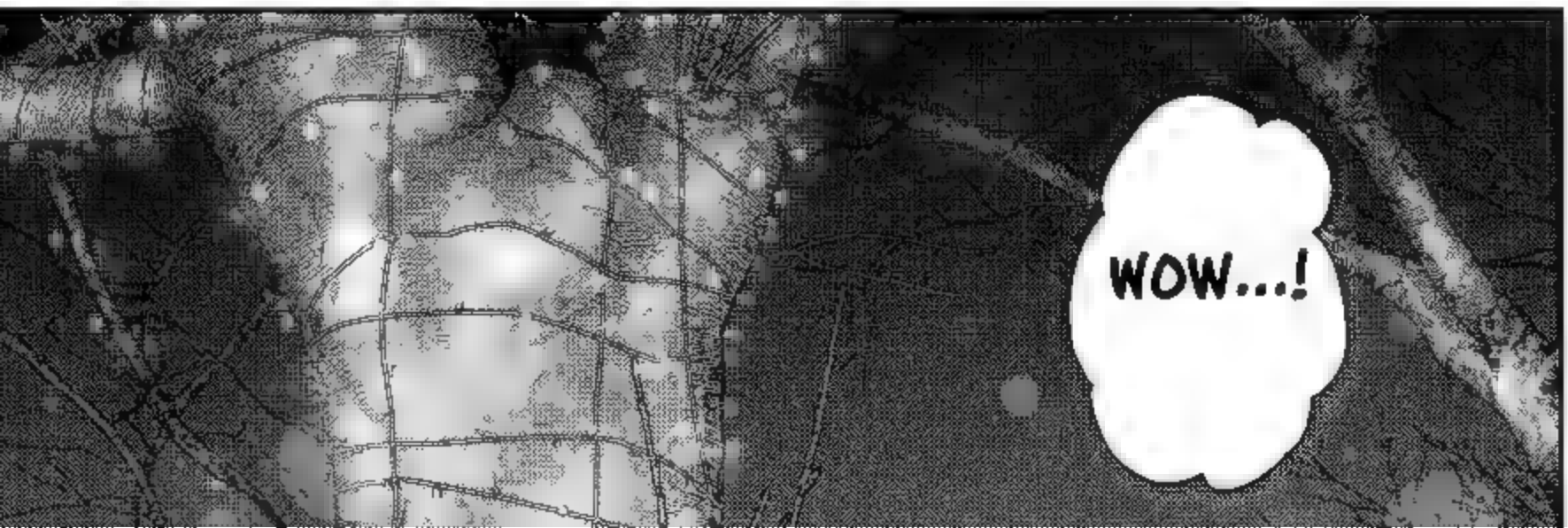
...

GRIP

ME NEITHER.






WOW...!

IT'S SO BEAUTI-FUL!

LET'S GO, LET'S GO!

THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A GIANT TREE FURTHER UP AHEAD.

AND IT JUST CONTINUES ON FOREVER, TOO!

ZOOM

SOME-ONE'S EXCITED...

OH! THERE'S A SANTA CLAUS OVER THERE! SO ADORABLE!

LOOK AT THAT, RINTARO-KUN...
DELETE THAT RIGHT NOW! I THINK I BLINKED IN IT
NOPE NOT AT ALL
わあ

AHHH, GEEZ

I REALLY LIKED THE PICTURE

OH BUM-MER

TA

DA

!

YOU CAN KEEP IT IF YOU TAKE A PICTURE WITH ME!

COULD YOU TAKE IT FOR ME?

...

JUST COME A BIT CLOSER!

I NEVER REALLY TOOK ANY SELFIES LIKE THIS, SO... WHAT SHOULD I DO?

LIKE THIS?

YUP!

OH, I THINK I GOT IT.

READY?

YUP! TAKE IT!

SNAP

...

RIGHT?

OH DANG...

FUNNY THAT.

...BUT WHENEVER THE CITY LIGHTS UP LIKE THIS, IT JUST GETS YOU EXCITED, HUH?

HONESTLY, I'VE BEEN THINKING THIS YESTERDAY, TOO...

...OH.

Everything looks so stunning!

OH, REALLY? WELL, I CAN'T BLAME HIM!

USAMI SAID THE SAME THING YESTERDAY.

SHARP ...

BUT WHEN I SAW YOU GUYS YESTERDAY, I JUST HAD A HUNCH!

NOT WHEN YOU FIRST BROUGHT IT UP...

HUH?! YOU KNEW?!

YOU MEAN THE THING WITH YORITA-KUN?

YOU KNOW, ABOUT WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT TWO DAYS AGO...

NO PROBLEM, I'M GLAD IT ALL WORKED OUT!

...YEAH. THANKS FOR EVERY-THING.

SO? DID THINGS GET SETTLED NOW?

FOR ALL THE TROUBLE I CAUSED!

I'M REALLY SORRY...

TELL ME ABOUT IT.

THOUGH, I WAS WORRIED FOR A HOT MINUTE...

...

NOT TO MENTION...

PLUS, IT'S AMAZING HOW YOU AND THE OTHERS HANDLED EVERYTHING DESPITE THE CHAOS.

I'M GLAD YOU ENJOYED IT...

OH, IT WASN'T MUCH!

STILL, YESTERDAY WAS A LOT OF FUN!

...WHILE YOU WERE WORKING ON YOUR CAKES.

I MEAN, I COULD WATCH YOU FROM UP CLOSE...

HUH?

I WAS REALLY GETTING MY FILL.

YES-TER-DAY...

IT JUST MADE ME HAPPY.

SEEING HOW YOU MADE THE CAKES I ALWAYS GOT TO ENJOY...

...YOU LOOKED SO COOL WHILE DOING IT, TOO.

AND...

...

...!

YOU'RE NOT MAKING THIS ANY BETTER...!

ALTHOUGH, YOU'RE ALWAYS COOL AND DASHING! ESPECIALLY TODAY!

BUT IT'S THE TRUTH! I THINK YOU'RE AMAZING!

HUH?!

Y-YEAH, OKAY. I GET IT...

SERIOUSLY, PLEASE...!

HA HA HA!

MAN, THAT WAS FUN!

WHOSE FAULT DO YOU THINK THIS IS?

IS IT JUST ME, OR IS YOUR FACE STILL RED?

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S OVER ALREADY!

...

WHEN SHOULD I... EVEN GIVE THIS TO HIM?

KAO-RUKO-SAN!

!

UM...

THIS...

Y-YEAH?

IT'S MY CHRISTMAS PRESENT... FOR YOU.

HUH?

SAY...

N-NO. DON'T SAY THAT. I'M REALLY HAPPY...!

SORRY THAT I COULDN'T DO THIS IN A MORE ROMANTIC WAY.

I HAD NO IDEA WHEN I SHOULD EVEN GIVE THIS TO YOU... AND SO I COMPLETELY LOST MY CHANCE EARLIER.

I WONDER WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO HIM...?

RIP

HUH? O-OH, SURE.

COULD YOU... MAYBE OPEN IT NOW?

!

I FIGURED THE STAIRS WOULD MAKE IT A LOT EASIER FOR US, SO...

E- ERM...

SAY WHAT?

WOULD YOU MIND IF I PUT IT ON FOR YOU RIGHT HERE?

IT'S... SO CUTE...!

CAN I?

...!

AH...

YEAH...

BOMP

BOMP

NO HAIR GOT STUCK, YEAH?

PMSH

...!

REACH

A-ALL GOOD...

I'M SURE I MUST'VE SURPRISED YOU.

...SORRY ABOUT THIS.

O-OH, I SEE...

While you weren't around.

...AND SO, WHEN WE ALL WENT TO KARAOKE TOGETHER LAST TIME, I ASKED HOSHINA-SAN AND YUZUHARA-SAN FOR ADVICE.

I HAD NO IDEA WHAT TO GIVE YOU AS A PRESENT...

AND SO...

THEY SAID "MAYBE AN ACCESSORY? I RARELY SEE HER WEAR ANY."

ON TOP OF THAT, I "DEFINITELY HAVE TO PUT IT ON FOR YOU THEN AND THERE."

THAT'S WHAT USAMI TOLD ME.

It's perfect!!

Nice

?

Idea!

GOSH...!

BUT EVEN WHEN IT CAME TO ACTUALLY CHOOSING A PRESENT...

I HONESTLY WAS AT A LOSS FOR THE LONGEST TIME.

...!

WHAT KIND OF ACCESSORIES YOU'RE INTO...

WHAT WOULD EVEN LOOK GOOD ON YOU...

ONCE I STARTED PONDERING ON THOSE THINGS, IT NEVER STOPPED.

BUT...

?

Stop making it harder for him

There's some good ones over there too!

...I STILL HAD A LOT OF FUN.

EVEN WHEN I FELT LOST LIKE THAT...

KAORUKO-SAN!

...I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU.

AND THEN AGAIN...

THERE ARE STILL SO MANY THINGS...

SO I WOULD BE HAPPY...

...IF YOU ALLOW ME TO LEARN MORE FROM NOW ON, TOO.

BUT AT THE SAME TIME

AND MAKE ME HAPPY

THESE THINGS FILL MY HEART...

12

EVEN WHEN WE CAN'T SEE EACH OTHER

TURN

...?

KAO-RUKO-SAN?

BOY, WAS I NERVOUS JUST NOW...

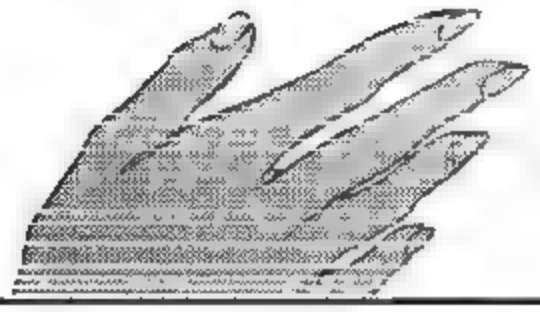
KLAK

ALL RIGHT, THAT SHOULD DO IT.

...I'D BE LYING.

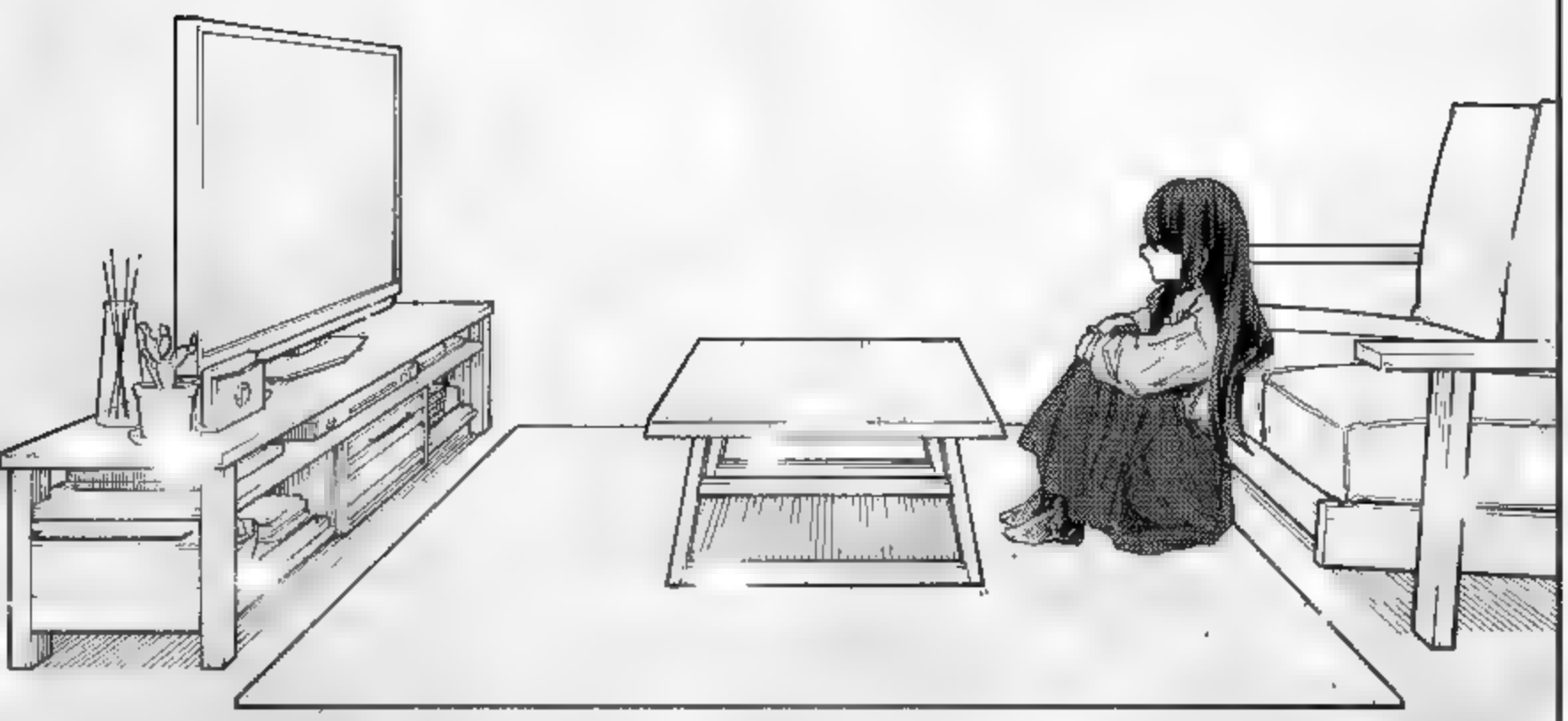
IF I SAID THAT I NEVER ONCE THOUGHT ABOUT IT...

BUT...



...TO LOCK THOSE THOUGHTS AWAY.

I STILL DECIDED...



Saka Mikami

Chapter 100: Special To You

The Fragrant Flower Blooms With Dignity

ALSO, THANKS AGAIN FOR YESTERDAY.

DID YOU GET SOME GOOD REST?

YUP! PLENTY OF REST!

SMILE (^_^)

HE ALWAYS LOOKS AFTER ME.

NO MATTER WHEN OR WHERE.

THAT HE'S NOT GOOD AT PUTTING HIS FEELINGS INTO WORDS.

I BET HE THINKS...

...

AS YOU... AL-WAYS DO...

YOU LOOK...

...REALLY CUTE TODAY.

...HE ALWAYS TRIES HIS HARDEST TO CONVEY WHAT HE FEELS AND THINKS.

BUT AT EVERY MOMENT...

EACH CONVER-SATION WE SHARE

EACH TIME WE MEET

THERE IS NO END TO IT

I REALIZE THAT

...KEEP ON GROWING ENDLESSLY.

MY FEELINGS FOR YOU...

...WANT-
ING MORE
THAN
THIS.

TAP

I
START...

TO
THINK I
WAS THIS
GREEDY.

I CAN'T
BELIEVE
MYSELF...

...YOU'VE
ALWAYS
BEEN THERE
FOR ME.

KAORUKO-
SAN!

ALL
THIS
TIME...

...AT
EVERY
MOMENT.

YOU
CARE
FOR
ME...

SIMPLY BY
CHANGING
MY OWN
APPEARANCE

AND IF
I COULD
PROTECT
THAT.

NO
REASON
FOR ME TO
HESITATE

THEN
THERE
IS

IT'S
BECAUSE
I FOUND
SOMETHING...

THAT
IS SO
MUCH MORE
PRECIOUS
TO ME.

...YOU ARE GIVING YOUR EVERYTHING FOR MY SAKE...

AND SINCE...

THAT I WAS BEING GREEDY.

THAT ALL THIS WAS A LUXURY.

I KEPT TELLING MYSELF.

BUT AT THE SAME TIME

AND MAKE ME HAPPY.

THESE THINGS FILL MY HEART

12

EVEN WHEN WE CAN'T SEE EACH OTHER

YET DESPITE THAT...

THAT'S NOT FAIR...

...IF YOU ALLOW ME TO LEARN MORE FROM NOW ON, TOO.

SO I WOULD BE HAPPY...

THING LIKE THAT...

YOUR ONE AND ONLY SPECIAL SOMEONE.

...!

...?

KAO-RUKO-SAN?

H-HOW...

...LOOK GOOD ON ME?

..IS IT?

DOES IT...

IT'S PERFECT.

...YEAH.

OH NO..

I CAN'T...

HOLD IT BACK ANYMORE.

NO MAT-TER

WHO IT MAY BE...

SPECIAL TO YOU.

THAT I AM

AND YET YOU LET ME KNOW

YOU SHOW ONLY KIND-NESS

EACH TIME I MEET YOUR GAZE

YOU MAKE ME FEEL THAT WAY

BLAM

...THAT MY HEART CAN BARELY TAKE IT

SO MUCH SO

THESE STAIRS.

ARE PERFECT FOR THIS

YOU'RE RIGHT

!

I LIKE YOU

...HUH?

I LIKE YOU

SO, SO MUCH.

...LOVE YOU.

I...

...IS WITHIN MY REACH RIGHT NOW.

YOUR FACE THAT ALWAYS SEEMS SO FAR...

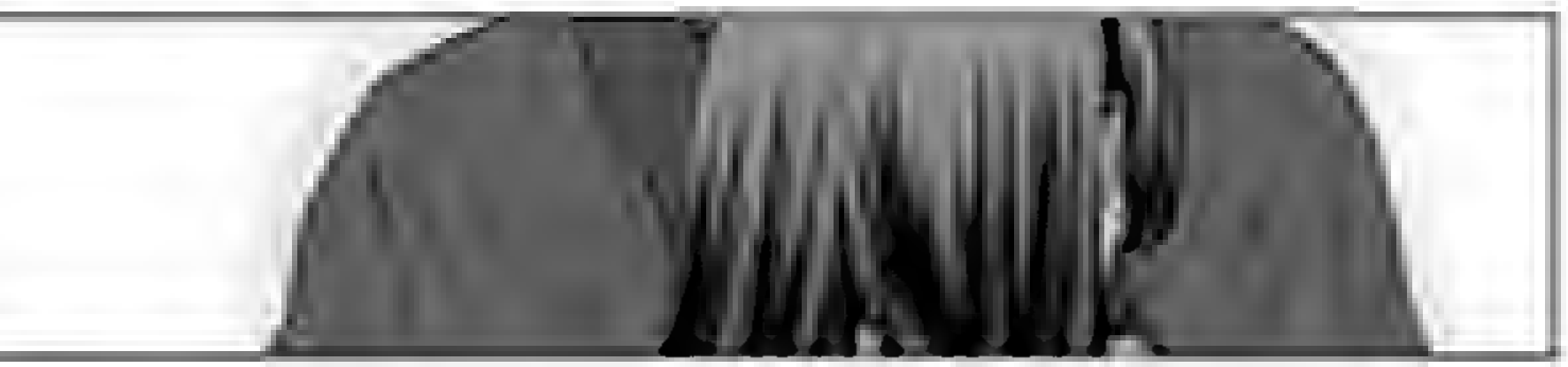
...I CAN EVEN TOUCH YOUR CHEEK.

IF I JUST REACH OUT A TINY BIT...

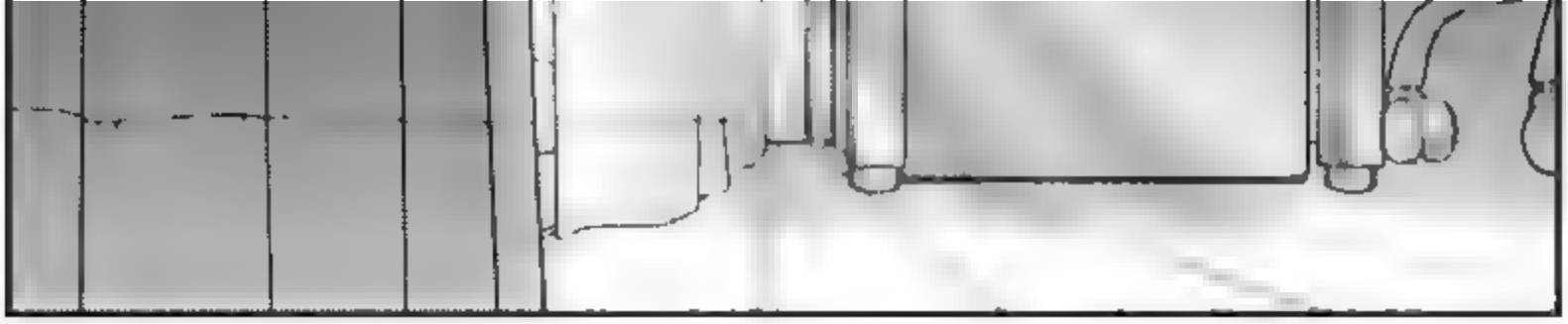
I LIKE YOU...

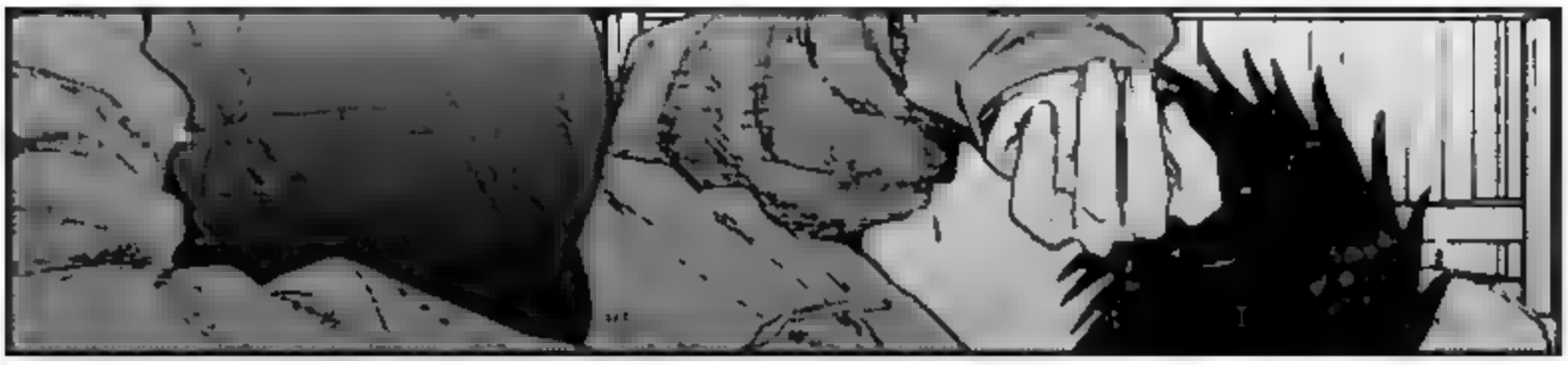
...RIN-TARO-KUN.

THMP
SORRY
THMP
THMP
THMP
THMP



RIN—





WAP
DANGIT...
I COULDN'T GET A WINK OF SLEEP
Chapter 101 December 26th

WHY THE HELL DID I DO THAT...?!

HE'S BEEN DOING THE SAME THING ALL NIGHT.

OH GOD...

AND NOW I PULL SOMETHING LIKE THIS...!

FIRST, I JUST BLURTED IT OUT BACK AT THE BEACH...

I'M GENUINELY SCARED OF MYSELF AT THIS POINT!

WHY DO I KEEP LOSING ALL SIGHT OF MY SURROUNDINGS WHEN KAORUKO-SAN IS INVOLVED...?!

BACK THERE...

...

IT FELT LIKE...

...TIME HAD COME TO A HALT.

...FELT SO LONG IN MY MIND.

EVEN THOSE FEW SECONDS...

LIKE AN ETERNITY.

...WHY I EVEN DID SOME-THING SO BOLD.

I HAVE NO IDEA...

BWUSH!

...!

IT'S JUST...

...

I LIKE YOU SO MUCH...

I LIKE YOU...

IN THAT VERY MOMENT...

...WASN'T ANYTHING I HAD BEEN USED TO. IT WAS DIFFERENT FROM "LIKING HER" OR "THINKING THAT SHE IS CUTE."

...WHAT I FELT...

TOWARD HER...

...OF DESCRIBING THOSE FEELINGS, BUT...

AND I DON'T KNOW IF THERE'S EVEN A CORRECT WAY...

IT FELT LIKE...

...MORE PRECIOUS TO ME THAN ANYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD.

...SHE HAD BE-COME...

PRE-CIOUS...?! REALLY?!
CAN I EVEN SAY THAT...?
AND THAT ISN'T ENOUGH OF A REASON TO GO AND DO THAT...!
...
...!
PLING

Kaoruko Waguri
Morning, Rintaro-kun!

WHO COULD IT BE THIS EARLY...?

NOT TO MENTION THAT WE'VE GOT WINTER BREAK...

DIDN'T THIS HAPPEN BEFORE...?

FREEZE

IT'S KAO-RUKO-SAN...!

I JUST DIDN'T SLEEP AT ALL, REALLY.

Morning.
7 14

Oh, you're up early, considering it's st'll winter break!
7 14

...?

SHUP

SHUP

But
7:14

But more importantly.
7 15

I know it's early, but I've got a favor to ask of you...
7 15

I'M SO SORRY!

...TO GIVE YOU YOUR CHRISTMAS PRESENT...!

I COM-PLETELY FORGOT...

HERE!

SO SHE DID GET ME SOME-THING...

STILL, THANKS.

OH, YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE JUST FOR THAT.

THINKING ABOUT IT... I'M GLAD I GAVE HER MY PRESENT EARLY YESTERDAY...

I DON'T THINK I WOULD'VE HAD THE CONFIDENCE TO DO SO AFTER...WHAT HAPPENED.

I know it's early, but I've got a favor to ask of you...

7 16

There's something I have to give you. so could you make some time for me?

7 16

SO THIS IS WHAT SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT...

THIS WAY, I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO GET FLUSTERED ABOUT THINKING OF SEEING HER AGAIN.

I completely forgot about it...

I THINK IT WAS FOR THE BEST THAT WE MET AS SOON AS THIS.

STILL...

CLANG

...IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I FELT THAT NERVOUS TYPING A RESPONSE.

7 16

Sure, I can do that. What time works for you?

AND HONESTLY...

KAO-RUKO-SAN?

SO...

...

I'LL FLINCH
HUH?!
DID YOU... GET ANY SLEEP...?

YEAH... TO BE HONEST, I COULDN'T SLEEP AT ALL.

AHHH, OF COURSE IT DOES...!
I MEAN, YOUR VOICE SOUNDS JUST AS SLEEPY.
I...I TRIED TO HIDE MY EYEBAGS WITH MAKE-UP... BUT YOU COULD TELL...?

...!
SAME HERE.
NEITHER DID I.

...

...!

...OH.

I WAS AWAKE ALL NIGHT...

OH, OKAY.

I SEE...

...

...

...

I THINK... I TRIED TO TALK AS MUCH AS I COULD, BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT I WAS EVEN SAYING ANYMORE...

Y-YEAH, ME TOO!

HONESTLY, EVEN THE WAY HOME IS JUST ONE BIG BLUR TO ME.

Y-
YEAH...

IT'S JUST... MY HEAD COULDN'T KEEP UP WITH WHAT HAPPENED!

Ha
na
ha!

ぱちっ
BLINK

MY HEART'S ABOUT TO BURST OVER HERE...!

AH, CRAP...

...

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M STARING AT HER LIPS NOW...

GASP!

!

...!

...!

BLUSH

HE SO CAUGHT ME STARING JUST NOW...!

O-OF COURSE!

CAN I OPEN IT RIGHT NOW?

OH YEAH, I FORGOT ABOUT YOUR PRESENT!

UM...

CLENCH

...

I'M PATHE-TIC!

DANGIT! I'M PANICKING SO MUCH I FORGOT HOW TO EVEN UNDO A RIBBON PROPERLY...!

I THINK...

...I'M GONNA STOP DYING MY HAIR BLOND.

...

...!

EAR-
RINGS...

...I FIGURED THEY'D LOOK GREAT ON YOU.

...BUT WHEN I SAW THEM THE FIRST TIME...

I WASN'T REALLY SURE WHAT TO GET YOU AT FIRST...

R-REALLY...?

I LOVE THEM. THANKS A LOT!

I SEE...

AND EVENTUALLY, I COULDN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT THEM, SO...

...

YOU KNOW...

...?

THAT'S GREAT...

PHEW

IF...

...I THOUGHT YOU'D ALSO STOP WEARING YOUR EAR-RINGS.

WHEN YOU DYED YOUR HAIR BLACK...

YOU DIDN'T WEAR THEM, REMEM-BER?

WHEN YOU BOYS MET UP WITH AYU AND THE OTHERS...

...!

ON THAT DATE WE WENT ON SHORTLY AFTER YOU HAD DYED YOUR HAIR...

HEE HEE...

AND SO...

WHEN I SAW YOU...

WEARING YOUR EARRINGS AGAIN...

MORNING, KAORUKO-SAN.

MORNING...!

I WAS JUST KINDA...

...RELIEVED THAT THEY WERE BACK.